

Committee: Port Health & Environmental Services Committee	Dated: 18 May 2021
Subject: Commercial Environmental Health and Port Health Service Plans 2021-2022	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1, 6
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	Existing local risk budgets
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Jon Averbs, Director of Markets & Consumer Protection	For Decision
Report author: Tony Macklin, Assistant Director (Public Protection)	

Summary

This report seeks approval for the Commercial Environmental Health Team's Service Plan for 2021-22 during the on-going COVID 19 pandemic but at the same time being flexible enough to respond to the needs of the recovery of the City of London.

In addition, the report seeks approval for Port Health's Service Plan for 2021/22 in relation to food premises inspections.

These plans are submitted annually and require approval by your committee.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- a) Approve the approach outlined in paragraph 14 of this report relating to Commercial Environmental Health's Service Plan;
- b) Approve the approach outlined in paragraph 17 relating to Port Health's Service Plan; and
- c) Note that a further report will be brought back to this Committee when future expectations have been confirmed by the Food Standards Agency (paragraph 18).

Main Report

Background

1. In order to be transparent and accountable, local authorities are required to gain Member approval for plans annually setting out their enforcement work in key areas, and Food Safety and Health & Safety are two such areas for which this is required.
2. We must also however, continue to also meet the local needs of City businesses, residents, workers and visitors and City Corporation's vision and aims as set out in the Corporate Plan 2018-2023 and this is achieved through our departmental Business Plan and individual teams' Service Plans which detail the work that will be done and by which we are judged overall by our Key Performance Indicators.
3. However the COVID-19 pandemic caused us to have to rethink our approach and in July 2020 we submitted to this Committee a different form of Service Plan for Commercial Environmental Health covering Food Safety and Health & Safety which set out a graduated return to normal once the COVID-19 lockdown was lifted and the City began to return to normality.
4. Unfortunately, re-occurring lockdowns caused us to review this already revamped Service Plan which was presented in a short report to this Committee in November 2020.

Current Position

Commercial Environmental Health

5. We are still prioritising our work to ensure that City businesses in a variety of sectors operate and remain safe for their customers. This has meant that officers from the Commercial Team have been present in the City throughout the various lockdowns and easing to support business, ensure compliance and promote confidence.
6. To this end, the work below outlines our current priorities.
 - Ensuring COVID-19 Compliance in all open business premises with a public interface either pro-actively or by reacting intelligence / complaints.
 - Reviewing the documentation of all SME businesses who have registered an interest in being a member of the Covid Compliant Accreditation Scheme (a requirement of the City of London Covid Recovery Fund) and for which we had over 130 expressions of interest as of 29th April.
 - Reviewing the documentation of all other businesses who have registered an interest in being a member of the Covid Compliant Accreditation Scheme.

- Undertaking food hygiene inspections / interventions in food businesses as prescribed by the current Food Standards Agency's guidance, based on risk, complaints and emerging issues.
 - Undertaking inspection audits of all cooling tower sites which are deemed to be either high risk or for which we have received intelligence / complaints to indicate that the risks are not being managed correctly.
 - Following up on all track and trace City COVID-19 cases.
 - Continuing with the Health & Safety Investigation into significant incidents.
7. It is possible that a number of these priorities can be achieved simultaneously within the same premises dependent upon the industry sector, and the size and scope of the business.
 8. The Food Standards Agency are yet to issue further guidance on how they expect Local Authorities to undertake food premises interventions moving forward. When this is known, a further report will be presented to this Committee.

Port Health Service

9. The Port Health Service has continued to operate throughout the various COVID-19 lockdowns and easements over the past year. However, the Service has focussed its attention on undertaking border controls on food and feed that have been imported from countries outside of the EU. The Service has seen imports of food and feed increase by over 25% when compared to the previous year.
10. In addition, the Service has been preparing for border controls on EU food and feed imports, which will be implemented in October 2021 (documentary checks) and January 2022 (introduction of physical checks).
11. Food premises interventions have also been affected by the pandemic and the focus has been on supporting businesses comply and recover.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

12. This proposal will continue to support two of the main aims of the City Corporation's Corporate Plan 2018 to 2023:

Contribute to a flourishing society

1. People are safe and feel safe.

Support a thriving economy

6. We have the world's best legal and regulatory framework and access to global markets.

Local Implications

13. We have been storing up an excessive backlog of food safety inspections for 2021-2022 due to the UK transitioning through various lockdowns and easings, but we hope as City food businesses react to Government's roadmap, we will again be able to engage with them with respect to Food Safety and Health & Safety as well as ensuring COVID-19 Compliance.

Proposals

14. As the City Corporation's strategic priority remains that the City returns to trading normally as soon as is safely possible, so our work with all City businesses on COVID-19 Secure advice and enforcement continues to take priority and therefore we must adopt a risk-based approach continue to focus upon:
 - a) ensuring various COVID-19 guidance and legislation are being followed to make City businesses COVID-19 secure
 - b) cooling towers' water systems are being managed to prevent the spread of *Legionella sp* bacteria;
 - c) dealing with matters of evident concern arising out of the above; and
 - d) assisting the City & Hackney Public Health Team with the "track & trace" follow-up of City COVID-19 cases.

and

 - e) focus on inspecting our unregistered, overdue and known non-compliant food businesses that are open and trading.
15. Finally, the number of food businesses which have recently re-opened and/or will re-open on 17th May, we believe can realistically inspect going forward over the next year, but any further lockdown(s) will mean we will have an increasing backlog going into future years.
16. Again, many of these priorities can be achieved simultaneously within the same premises dependent upon the industry sector, and the size and scope of the business.
17. The Port Health Service will continue to:
 - a) focus on imported food and feed controls at the border,
 - b) prepare for the implementation of EU border controls later this financial year,
 - c) continue to support business recover from and compliance with COVID-19 related restrictions.
 - d) undertake interventions based on risk, taking Food Standards Agency guidance into account.
18. A further report will be presented to this Committee when the Food Standards Agency has issued guidance on how they expect Local Authorities to undertake food premises interventions in the future.

Conclusions

19. Both Commercial Environmental Health and Port Health have continued to operate during the various COVID-19 related lockdowns and easements. This has meant that resources have been refocused in the past year to support businesses and ensure compliance, whilst considering risk.
20. The proposals in paragraph 14, 17 and 18 ensure a risk-based and supportive approach as we ease out of the COVID-19 restrictions.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

Port Health & Environmental Services: July 2020 Agenda Item 14 - [Commercial Environmental Health Team Service Plan 2020-2021](#)

Port Health & Environmental Services: November 2020 Agenda Item 7 - [Amendments to the Commercial Environmental Health Team Service Plan 2020-2021 with respect to Food Safety](#)

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